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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 002968

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTION #51: LEONEL SWEEPS THE ELECTION

REF: A. (A) SANTO DOMINGO 2933 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. (B) SANTO DOMINGO 2525

[1](#)C. (C) SANTO DOMINGO 2294

[1](#)D. (D) SANTO DOMINGO 2722

[1](#)1. This is no. 51 in our series on the Dominican presidential election:

ELECTION RETURNS: LEONEL SWEEPS THE ELECTION

Leonel Fernandez Reyna, former president (1996-2000) and PLD candidate in the May 16 election, won a sweeping electoral victory May 16 and is scheduled to be inaugurated August 16 as President for another four-year term, along with Vice President-elect Rafael Alburquerque. In a final result consistent with pre-election polls, with all 12,203 precincts reporting, Fernandez and Alburquerque obtained 57.11 percent (2,063,871 votes); runner-up President Hipolito Mejia (PRD) 33.65 percent (1,215,928); Eduardo Estrella 8.65 percent (312,493); and minor candidates 0.59 percent (21,408). Turnout, as in previous Dominican elections, was high -- 3,613,700 voters, nearly 73 percent of the 5,020,703 on the rolls. The PLD ticket won in 29 of the country's 32 provinces.

The election proceeded normally and calmly in most places, but according to the local press violent incidents left three persons dead and 11 injured. These incidents added to a previous toll of deaths and injuries during the campaign. (Septel reports further on behavior and atmosphere during the election.)

Timely Concession by Mejia

President Mejia publicly conceded the outcome shortly after 11:00 p.m. on election night, five hours after the polls closed. The Central Electoral Board (JCE) had as of that time released a single report, based on returns from only 2.8 percent of the polling stations. The major political parties had computed their own preliminary results, taken from reports of their poll watchers. Election observers of the OAS and "Participacion Ciudadana" (PC) made "quick count" estimates of the returns, and one polling firm conducted an exit poll. A Penn Shoen exit poll was given to international media at around 9 p.m. All tallies Fernandez and Alburquerque winning on the first round, with the following percentages: OAS, 58.25 percent; PC, 56.57 percent; and exit poll, 56.8 percent.

Favorable Reactions, Criticisms

International observers, including those provided by the OAS, International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), and Lima Accord (who came in conjunction with the National Democratic Institute - NDI), commented positively to the press about the organization and conduct of the election. Former president of Colombia Andres Pastrana, who headed the IFES mission, congratulated the Dominican people for having carried out a clean, transparent voting process with high participation. They and other observers also commended Mejia for promptly recognizing Fernandez as the winner, setting a democratic example and forestalling any unrest. OAS mission chief Santiago Murray criticized bureaucratic procedures for having slowed collection and announcement of returns, and promised to deliver written recommendations for improvements. Lima Accord representatives called for controls on candidates' media use and campaign financing.

Priorities for New Administration

President-elect Fernandez, who during the campaign had criticized the rise in foreign debt in President Mejia's term (2000-2004), told the press May 17 that he planned to comply with the Dominican Republic's international financial

obligations, including honoring sovereign bonds. He said he expected to stabilize the peso-dollar exchange rate to lower domestic consumer prices. Fernandez proposed a "government of national unity" and expressed a desire for good relations between the PLD and the ruling PRD, soon to be in the opposition. His mandate from the voters, he said, would be "to confront the economic and social crisis that affects the country." Fernandez promised to appoint a transition team to work with the current authorities during the three-month transition.

Fernandez's Background and Platform

We review Fernandez's background in Ref A. Of all the candidates, he made the most detailed proposals for economic recovery -- in speeches (Ref B), in a 150-page PLD platform (Ref C), and in a think tank study on the economic "model" to follow (Ref D). The proposals generally emphasized economic stability and incentives for private business development. The PLD platform also called for strengthening of the rule of law and the nation's political, administrative, and judicial institutions.

12. Drafted by Bainbridge Cowell.

13. This report and others in our election series can be read on the SIPRNET at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/index.cfm> along with extensive other current material.
HERTELL